



# Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project

## The Alaskan Way Tunnel is Safe for Drivers

December 2004

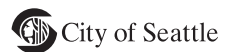
The public has asked whether tunnels are really safe for drivers. Here are the facts:

- This is a public safety project. The viaduct must be replaced before the next earthquake takes it out of service permanently.
- The tunnel will be safe for drivers. Stringent federal and state standards for roadway design require adequate sight-distances, shoulders for accidents or broken-down cars, adequate lane widths for conditions, and emergency egress.
- The tunnel will be built to the highest industry design and safety standards.
  - o Flammable and combustible liquids, and other hazardous materials will not be allowed in the tunnel. Federal regulations require emergency exits for stranded motorists to ensure that drivers and passengers will be able to quickly exit the tunnel in the event of an emergency.
  - o The tunnel will be equipped with state of the art fire detection and suppression equipment that will be actively monitored around the clock from a tunnel control facility. In addition, powerful ventilation systems will be included to provide fresh air in the event there is smoke in the tunnel.
  - o To reach the Battery Street Tunnel, drivers will exit the tunnel and drive onto an aerial structure. The roadway will be at 7% grade, approximately the same grade as the West Seattle Bridge. This grade will not cause traffic congestion or substantial delay to trucks. The grade will provide a natural speed reduction transition to the heavily traveled Western Avenue off-ramp and Battery Street Tunnel curve.
- The tunnel will be safe in the event of an earthquake. Structural engineers agree that tunnels are one of the safest places to be during an earthquake because the tunnel moves with the earth. An example is how well the Bay Area Rapid Transit tunnel fared during the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989. The system withstood the earthquake forces and resumed service within hours to serve as a key transportation “lifeline” during the time that the Bay Bridge and Cypress Freeway were shut down and undergoing extensive repairs.
- The Battery Street Tunnel will be upgraded to meet today’s fire and life safety standards. This means new fire suppression systems will be installed and exit corridors added in the event of an emergency. Additional vertical clearance will be added where practicable.



### For More Information

- Visit the Web site at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct)
- Call the hotline at 206-269-4421
- Send an e-mail to [viaduct@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:viaduct@wsdot.wa.gov)
- Send a letter to: Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project  
c/o Washington State Department of Transportation  
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424  
Seattle, WA 98104



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